

American Opinion Summary

Department of State

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No. 152

February 12, 1963

CUBA

The Administration's Cuba "briefing" of last week draws continuing commendation from a number of observers.

The presentation was "extremely impressive" both as to Secretary McNamara's display and the President's "forceful" follow-up -- and should convince any "reasonable" critic that the Administration "knows what it is talking about when it says there has been no Soviet build-up" in Cuba; several assert (e.g., N. Y. Times, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Denver Post, Watertown Times).

As of now, the "burden of proving an offensive threat to the U.S. from Cuba rests with its critics," some declare (e.g., C.S. Monitor, Milwaukee Journal). To the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, "it is remarkable and to some degree shameful that the President should be compelled to go to such lengths" to prove his case. Walter Lippmann is optimistic that the arrangements between Sen. Keating and the CIA for consultation and exchange of information "should put an end to the unseemly controversy."

The Louisville Courier predicts that the critics' "impact on public belief will decline." But, better than the "muzzle" proposed by Under Secretary Ball, says the Baltimore Sun, is the prospect that "those who ride (the Cuba issue) too fast or too fancily, as some are doing now, will wind up at the polls with a dead horse."

A number of commentators, however, render praise for the Administration's "frankness" with some criticisms. Both the public and the Congress "should be reassured," declares the Boston Herald. But if the White House "has been more straightforward in its reporting on the Cuban situation from the beginning it might not have had to cover so much now" (similarly, Los Angeles Times, Louisville Courier-Journal, Providence Journal).

And while the briefing served to "allay unfounded fears" about offensive missiles in Cuba, a number were not left "fully satisfied" about Soviet strength on the island, and Administration plans to deal with it (e.g., Des Moines Register, John S. Knight, Time, Newsweek, U.S. News & World Report). "Uncensored and unreserved," Barbara Drummond maintains, is the question: Will the U.S. "leave unchallenged and in the end accept Cuba as a Soviet military base?"

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The "next step" in Cuba policy excites much interest. The Philadelphia Inquirer "vigorously supports" Administration moves to determine "if and when" Premier Khrushchev intends to withdraw Soviet forces from Cuba (also, Scripps Howard, David Lawrence). Some propose blockading the island (Sen. Cooper, R-Ky., Rep. Rogers, R-Fla.). There is general agreement that the new U.S. shipping restrictions on trade with Cuba "will do little" (N.Y. Times, Wash. News and Star, Chicago News, New Republic). Sen. Goldwater (R-Ariz.) would do "anything that needs to be done to get rid of that cancer"; if it means war, "let it mean war."

The Louisville Courier-Journal sees the Administration "clearly" preferring "to contain the Cuban threat and to diminish it by a series of measures"--which is "surely the course of wisdom" (similarly, New Republic). With Walter Lippman, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch contends that "neither Castroism nor Communism can be ended by a show of American force."

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